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**North West Wales Dendrochronology Project
Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo,
Denbighshire**



**EAS Client Report 2009/19
December 2009**

**Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd
Unit 2 Glanypwll Workshops
Ffordd Tanygrisiau
Blaenau Ffestiniog
Gwynedd
LL41 3NW**

Registered in England N° 286978

**North West Wales Dendrochronology Project
Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo,
Denbighshire**

EAS Client Report 2009/19

**Commissioned by
Margaret Dunn
For
North West Wales Dendrochronology Project**

December 2009

**By
I.P. Brooks and K. Laws**

**Engineering Archaeological Services Ltd
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North West Wales Dendrochronology Project

Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo

SJ 0302 3724

NPRN 28791

Status: Grade II Listed

Introduction

This report details the recording of Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo, undertaken to compliment both the dendrochronological sampling, undertaken by Oxford Dendrochronology Laboratory, and the documentary study undertaken by volunteers for the North Wales Dendrochronology Project. The fieldwork took place on 20th November 2009.

Methodology

The plans of Maes Tyddyn are based on measured sketch plans made during the recording of this house. The drawings of the timberwork were carried out by direct measurement at a scale of 1:20. Photographs were taken with a Nikon D80 digital SLR camera at a resolution of 10.2 mega pixels. Where practical all the photographs included a metric scale

Survey Report

Maes Tyddyn sits within the valley of the River Dee, approximately 500 m west of the village of Llandrillo (Figure 1). It is immediately adjacent to the property of Tyddyn-Ilan and is assumed to be its predecessor. Externally the walls are partly rendered and partly of roughly coursed stonework forming a house with an “L” shaped plan (Figure 2, Plates 1-4). There is also a modern kitchen extension attached to the northwest corner of the property. The roof is gabled with a gabled extension over the short southern wing and is covered by modern slates. Projecting from the northern, lateral, wall is a chimney (Plate 5). It has a diagonally set shaft with square ribs very similar to that on Branas-uchaf only 1.5 km to the west.

With the exception of the window in the upper storey of the eastern gable end, all of the windows are relatively modern in appearance. The gable window, however, has wooden ovolo mullions (Figure 5) of a form thought to be in used between 1567 and 1741 (Alcock and Hall, 1994, 38). There is clearly a blocked doorway in the southern wall of the short southern wing which may represent an earlier entrance to the property (Plate 4).

Internally the house consists of two rooms on the ground floor and three on the first floor. Three trusses were evident, which although similar differ in detail. Truss 1 (Figure 3, Plate 6) runs from above the fireplace in the eastern bedroom

across the width of the building. Only the lower portions were visible, but this showed a tie-beam with raking queen struts above. Slots in the principal rafters below the lower pair of purlins suggest the positions of windbraces which have been lost. The tie beam has a slight upward curve.

Truss 2 (Figure 4) runs through the middle of the house and can be traced in the dividing wall between the two ground floor rooms and between the bathroom and the eastern bedroom on the first floor (Plate 7). The full extent of this truss was visible. It consists of a collar and tie-beam truss with slightly upward curved tie-beam and collar. There are straight queen struts between the collar and tie beam and raking struts above the collar. There is also a diagonal strut between the northern post and the tie-beam. Slots in the principal rafters suggest the presence of windbraces below both pairs of purlins, now lost. The post on the southern side can be traced almost down to ground level and there is a second tie-beam at a height of 2.33 m from ground level (Plate 8) cut by a modern doorway. The post has been slightly modified to allow for the door way between the two ground floor rooms. Although it has been truncated before it reaches the floor the southern post appears to relate to a curious stone mound projecting from the wall between the two ground floor rooms (Plate 9). Both the post and the stone probably mark the southern extent of the original house suggesting that the short southern wing is an extension. It also suggests that the original building was timber framed, possibly sitting on a low stone plinth. Further evidence of the timber framed nature of the original building is shown in the western bedroom, where a series of studs are evident in the northern wall (Plate 10).

Truss 3 (Figure 3, Plate 11) is in the western bedroom, the southern end of which is supported by a longitudinal beam which may have been a wall plate, but is more likely a structural timber related to the building of the short southern wing and partly acted as a purlin at the break of slope between the roofs of the main house and the added wing. In such it can also be seen to extend as far as Truss 2. The truss is a tie-beam and collar truss with slightly upwardly curved tie-beam and collar. There are slightly raked queen struts between the tie-beam and collar and raked struts above the collar. There is also a diagonal brace between the surviving northern post and the tie-beam. A mortice slot at the southern end of the tie-beam suggests that there was a matching brace to a southern post. Slots in the principal rafters below the lower purlins suggest that there were windbraces at least at this lower level. There are also a two mortice slots and a series of dowel holes on the underside of the tie-beam suggesting the presence of a partition at some time (Plate 12).

The ceilings in the ground floor rooms may be of slightly different dates. The main lateral beam in the eastern room is embedded in the chimney breast (Plate 13). It has a moderate chamfer and lamb's tongue stops (Plate 14). The joists are closely set and are joined to the main beam by a series of tenons on the lower half of the joists mated into mortice slots in the main beam. The joists have a slight chamfer and are stopped only where they meet the main beam with straight cut stops (Plate 15).

The ceiling in the western room appears to be a later insertion, possibly related to the addition of the short southern wing. There are a series of five stone corbels (Plate 16), high in the western wall which is assumed to relate to the original ceiling in this room. The existing ceiling has a main lateral beam which extends across the width of the south wing. This beam is moderately chamfered with no stops. The joists are slightly offset in the beam (Plate 17) and join with a series of mortice and tenon joints.

Also within the western ground floor room there is some evidence for a blocked opening in the south west corner of the room (Plate 18). This possible opening was not visible on the outside wall of the property and the function and full extent of the opening is uncertain.

Within an out building, running roughly at right angles to the house a cyclopean door head was noted. Now framing the inside of a window (Plate 19), it is clear from the outside of the building that this was once a doorway (Plate 20). It is uncertain whether this door head is *in situ* or has been moved from elsewhere.

Dendrochronology Sampling

Six samples were taken from this house, three were from the primary phase of the construction, one was from the beam supporting the southern end of Truss 3 and two from timbers from the ceilings.

Conclusions

There are at least three phases of construction associated with Maes Tyddyn which can be summarised as:

1. A storeyed box framed house with tall box framed trusses and a lateral fireplace. The fireplace has a prominent diagonally set chimney which is comparable with Branas-uchaf only 1.5 km away. The corbels in the western wall may have been set over a secondary fireplace, although this remains speculative. The ovolo-moulded window in the eastern gable may be of this date, although it may be a slightly later insertion
2. The extension of the western half of the house to form a short southern wing. This also involved the re-timbering of the western ground floor room. It is likely that at least the lower portions of the original timber walls were replaced in stone at this point.
3. The insertion of the staircase in its current position required the blocking of a doorway in the southeast corner of the south wing.

The relationship of the house to the cyclopean door head in the out building is difficult to determine, although it is possible that it may have related to an early phase in the construction of Maes Tyddyn

Acknowledgments

The recording of this building was commissioned by Margaret Dunn for the North Wales Dendrochronology Project and she also organised access to the building. The house forbearance of the owner during the recording of the house is gratefully acknowledged. The buildings were also visited by Richard Suggett of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, whose analysis of the buildings was extremely useful.

References

- Alcock, N.W. and Hall, L. 1994 *Fixtures and fittings in dated houses 1567-1763*. Council for British Archaeology.
- Haslam, R., Orbach, J and Voelcker, A. 2009 *The Buildings of Wales. Gwynedd. Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merioneth*. Yale University Press, London
- Smith, P. 2001 Houses c.1415 – c.1642. in Beverley Smith, J and Beverley Smith, L (eds.) *History of Merioneth, Volume II: The Middle Ages*. Merioneth Historical and Record Society



Plate 1: Western gable end, looking east



Plate 2: Northern aspect, looking south



Plate 3: Eastern Gable wall, looking NW



Plate 4: Southern Aspect, looking north



Plate 5: Detail of the chimney, looking SE



Plate 6: Truss 1, looking NE



Plate 7: Truss 2, looking west



Plate 8: Base of southern post with probable tie-beam, looking east



Plate 9: Main southern post and stone projection, looking east



Plate 10: Studwork in the western bedroom, looking north



Plate 11: Truss 3, looking NE



Plate 12: Mortice and dowel holes below Truss 3



Plate 13: Chimney breast in eastern ground floor room, looking north



Plate 14: Northern end of main ceiling timber, eastern ground floor room, looking NW



Plate 15: Chamfer and stops on joists and main beam, eastern ground floor room, looking NW



Plate 16: Stone corbels in western wall, looking west



Plate 17: Pattern of main ceiling beam and joists in western room, looking up



Plate 18: Blocked opening in SW corner of western room, looking west.



Plate 19: Cyclopean door head in the out building, looking east



Plate 20: Partly blocked doorway in out building, looking west

Appendix 1: Sources

Listing Information

Maes Tyddyn

Street Name and Number: B4401,

Listed Building Reference: 81888

Grade: II

Date Listed: 03/10/2003

Date Amended: 03/10/2003

Co-ordinates: 303030,337243

Locality: Tyddyn Llan

Community: Llandrillo

Council: Denbighshire

National Park: No

Location

Off the main road approx 400m NW of the village, and immediately SE of Tyddyn Llan. Approached by a driveway from the W, and set in gardens.

History

The house has not been fully investigated, but it appears to represent a C17 storeyed, timber-framed house of high status. External detail appears mostly C19 or later, but there is a (reset) cyclopaean doorhead in the recently rebuilt single storeyed outbuilding range. It has been suggested that the house may have originated as a dower house to an earlier Tyddyn Llan.

Interior

Not inspected: said to comprise hall and parlour on ground floor, the former with large fireplace with bressumer; 3 chambers above. Timber framing exposed internally, including close-studded walling, substantial queen-post trusses with arch bracing, and some wind-braces.

Exterior

A tall 2 storeyed range with exposed rubble walling to gables; rendered rear elevation (perhaps over timber-framing); some framing exposed in front wall. Asymmetrical slate roof (lower over front elevation). Large lateral stack projecting from rear wall, with shoulders to diagonal shafts. Later single storeyed extension wraps round rear and W gable end. Small-paned casement windows.

Reason for Listing

Listed as a fine regional house of the C17 or earlier, the ornate lateral chimney and high quality timber-work denoting its high social status.

References

RCAHMW (Merioneth/Denbighshire domestic file SJ03NW); Peter Smith, Houses of the Welsh Countryside, 1988 (map 16).

Haslam, R., Orbach, J and Voelcker, A. 2009 *The Buildings of Wales. Gwynedd. Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merioneth*. Yale University Press, London (628)

MAES TYDDYN, adjoining, was the predecessor [to Tyddyn Llan]. C16 or early C17, marked by a very big lateral chimney, gabled under a massive diagonal stack. Encased and altered, but originally timber-framed. Hall and two outer rooms with good beamed ceilings; four bay wind-braced roof, of tie-beam trusses with queenposts, or raking struts, collars, and braces for the box frame. Was this a first-floor hall?

Smith, P. 2001 Houses c.1415 – c.1642. in Beverley Smith, J and Beverley Smith, L (eds.) *History of Merioneth, Volume II: The Middle Ages*. Merioneth Historical and Record Society (455)

G6 Maes Tyddyn (Llandrillo) SJ 0302 3465.

Part of a group of buildings around Tyddyn Llan, this is a large, now Victorian house. The name Maes Tyddyn is recent. The house is of interest as having clearly been a quite ambitious half-timbered lateral-chimney house, of high social status to judge from the ornate lateral chimney with diagonal shaft very similar to that added to Branas-uchaf (B2) not far distant. Although consisting on the ground floor of only two rooms, hall and parlour, under three chambers on the first floor, the ceilings are unusually high, and the quality of work good. Could this have been the Tyddyntraean, the dower house attached to an earlier Tyddyn Llan? The half-timbered walls have latterly largely been replaced by stone.

Alongside is a range of stone outbuildings at right-angles to the main house containing a (reset?) cyclopean doorway. The relationship between the house and these buildings is far from clear.



Figure 1: Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo
Location
Scale 1:25,000

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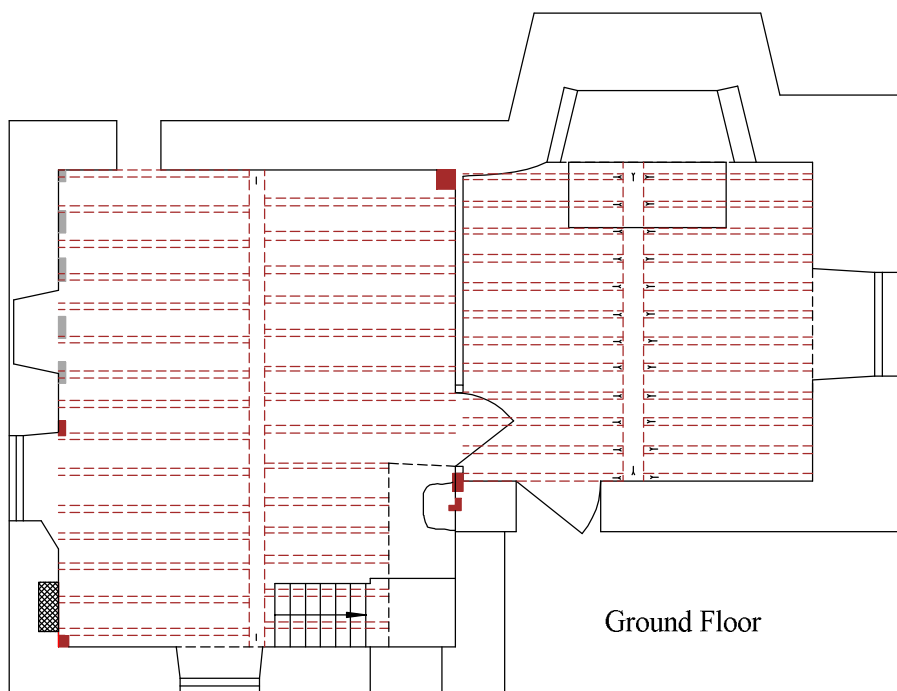
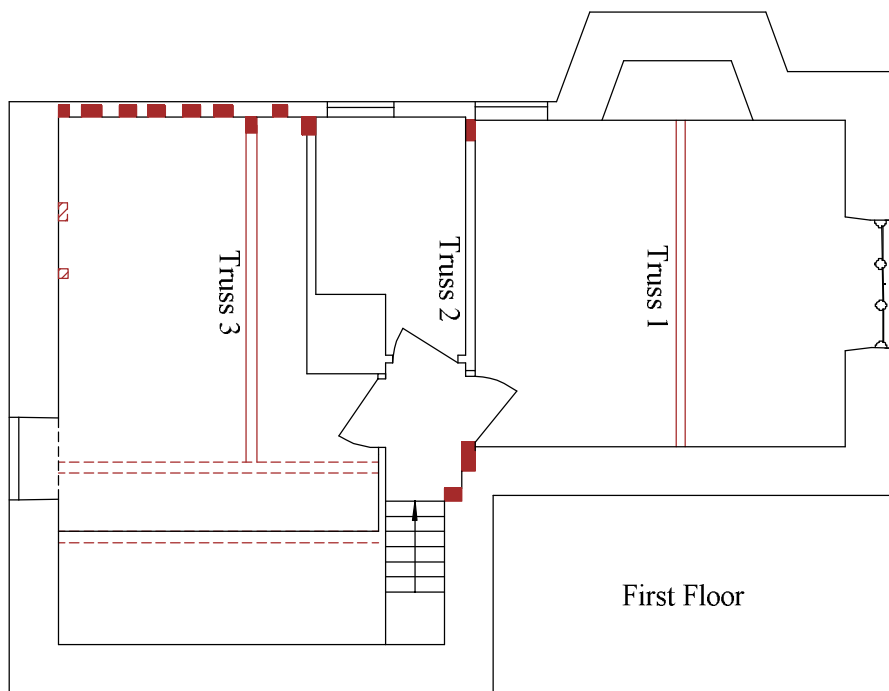


Figure 2: Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo
Scale 1:100

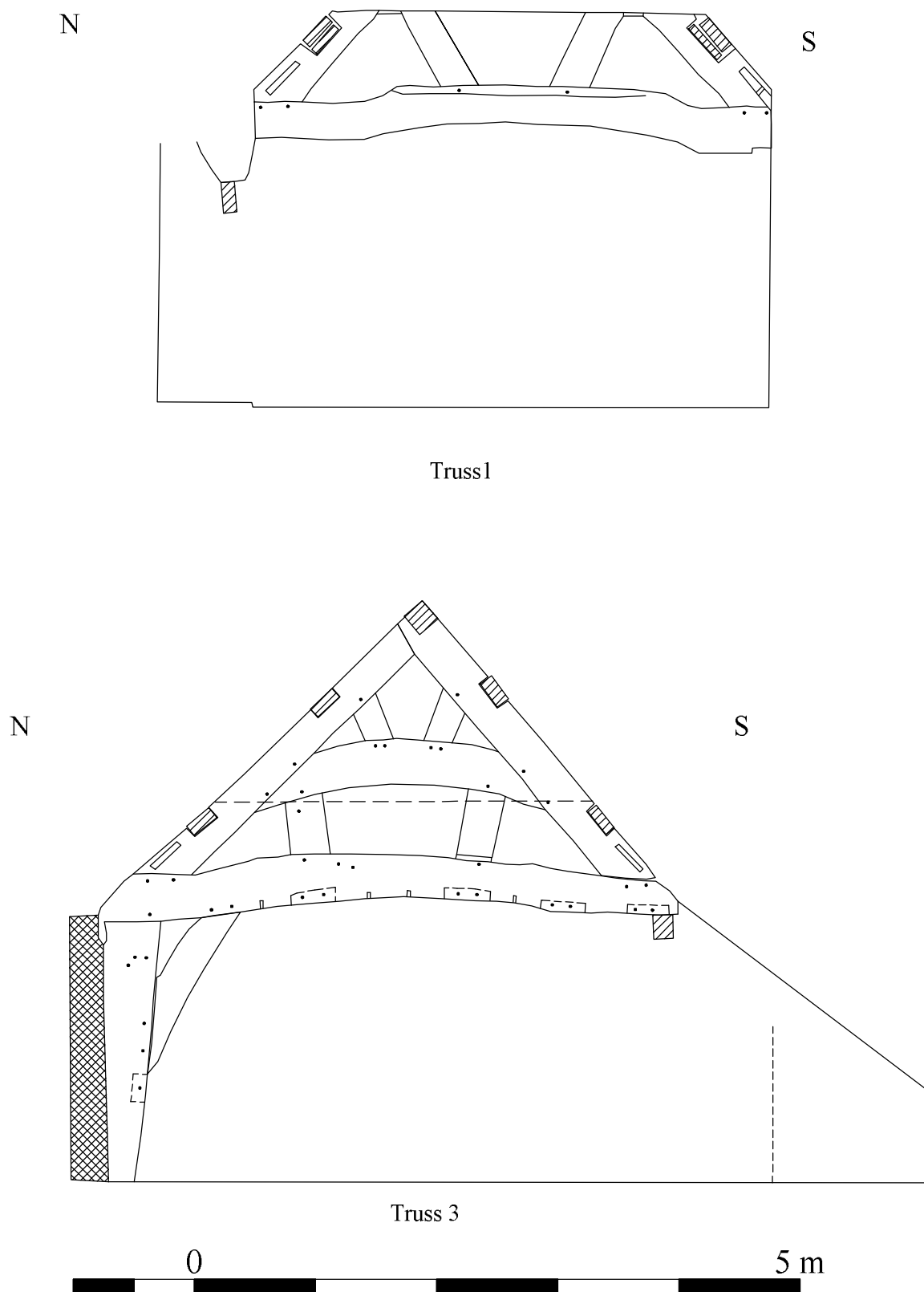
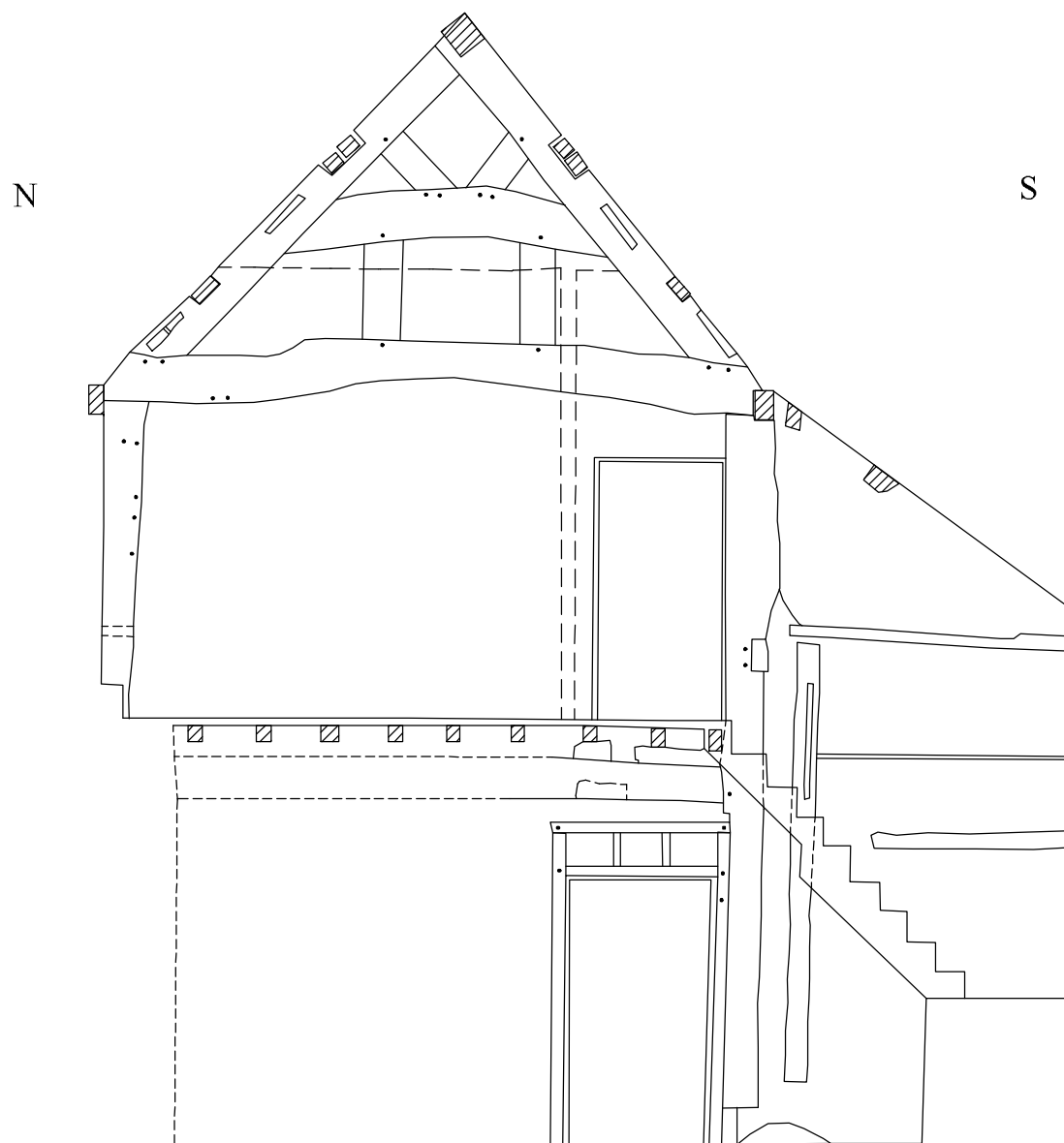


Figure 3: Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo
Trusses 1 and 3
Scale 1:50



Truss 2 and Profile



Figure 4: Maes Tyddyn, Llandrillo
Truss 2
Scale 1:50

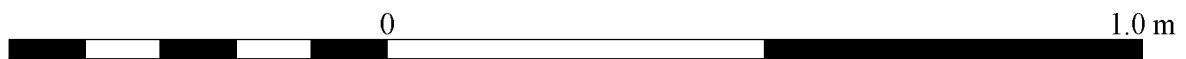
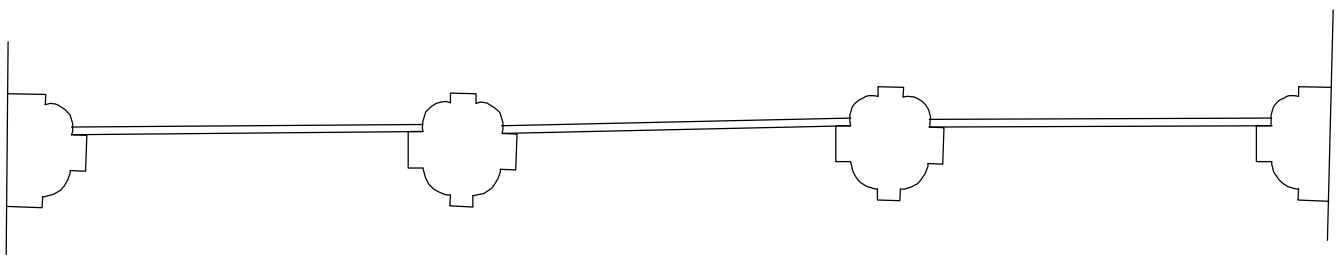


Figure 5: Section through gable window
Scale 1:10